

Chapter Two of Dharmakirti's *Pramanavarttika*

ADVANCED BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY COURSE – TERM 6

Class 8 - 2017 April 26 – Wednesday¹

TRACKS: 20170426Co8T1.MP3, 20170426Co8T2.MP3 & 20170426Co8TE.MP3

Institute for Buddhist Dialectics, McLeod Ganj, India

Teacher - GESHE KELSANG WANGMO

D R A F T of CLASS 8 NOTES

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NOTES TO READERS: This Draft was typed in class; then lightly edited & corrected. This is NOT a TRANSCRIPT of the recording. Since typing at the speed of classroom speech is impossible, it is offered for *what it is worth*.

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Chapter Two of Dharmakirti's *Pramanavarttika*

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20170426C08T1.MP3 - TRACK 1

REVIEW

The Second Chapter sets for the five factors: what are they?

The one who has become Pramana, the Buddha who's become enlightened. The second is Great Compassion. The third is Wisdom, the Teacher. The Sugata and the Protector.³

Establishes that the Buddha has become someone who is enlightened, thereby proving that anyone can attain that result. With the two causes, Great Compassion is described also as an **excellent intention**; while Wisdom realizing Selflessness is the **excellent application**. The way to fulfill the wish of Great Compassion, that all sentient beings be freed from suffering, and the Wisdom realizing Selflessness brings this about.

The result is two fold: the Sugata (the qualities, mental qualities in the continuum of a Buddha: the realizations and cessations). The Protector, out of the realization and cessations teaches and in that way protects sentient beings from suffering by way of teaching a way out of suffering.

According to the sequence presented and according to the reverse sequence. Which factor are we studying now? Great Compassion.

It takes many life times to generate Great Compassion in one's continuum, so if someone wants to generate Great Compassion, it is important to know, initially,

² **ROUGH DRAFT** -



³ Dignaga's 2-line Homage [highlights added here] from his *Compendium on Pramana* serves as basis of Dharmakirti's commentary:

To **the one who has become pramana**, the one **wishing to benefit migrators**,
To "the **teacher**", "the **sugata**", "the **protector**", I bow down.

ཚད་མར་གྱུར་པ་འགྲོ་ལ་ཕན་བཞད་པ། །སློན་པ་བདེ་ཤེགས་སློབ་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ཏེ།

from the outset, that it may take many lifetimes, so it is helpful to understand past and future lives. Not only that, but in order to generate Great Compassion there are different methods prescribed and one involves understanding that all sentient beings have been one's own mother.

So that also entails understanding past and future lives.

Last time, we started the extensive presentation of past and future lives. And three syllogisms are set out and we discussed syllogisms.

Mindfulness of Body, Mind, Feelings & Dharma

There may have been some misunderstanding last time when I was discussing mindfulness in the last class. Understanding continuum of consciousness requires observing our own minds, and one method for that is to practice mindfulness.

I don't know if the Western use of mindfulness is always the same as in Buddhism, even though it originated in Buddhism. Mindfulness has different meanings in Tibetan colloquial sense, it means to be remember; it can also be in the sense that a person has all sorts of mental activity, all sorts of thoughts, all sorts of stuff coming into their minds, so not necessarily positive.

But in the Buddhist context it basically means to recollect what we want to do; to be attentive and not carried away with our emotions.

Of course, our consciousness is always thinking of something, but in the Buddhist context, it means to be attentive, to recollect to stay present in the moment, to observe — there are four objects of mindfulness in the Tibetan tradition: body, mind, feeling and Dharma, the latter is sometimes replaced by mental factors.

So mind and feeling are explained, with feeling explained separately even though it is a type of mind. Why are they described separately?

Because we are so controlled by our feelings; they determine what afflictions arrive next. The longer we have a pleasant feeling, the more likely we'll be attached. If the feeling arises from a Lama, giving us special attention, smile, we expect it to occur again and again. If we're in a romantic relationship, again attachment.

Likewise with negative emotions, anger and aversion arise, resentment. Doesn't have to be full blown anger.

Also, anger and attachment, the feeling of pleasant or unpleasant feelings can both give rise to jealousy. If we have the pleasantness . . . jealousy is a result of a mix of having attachment and having resentment — towards those who have it.

What else, what other afflictions arise from feeling good?

VEN. KUNPHEN: Pride.

GESHE WANGMO: Right. What other afflictions, besides pride, arrogance, jealousy, anger, attachment, feeling of unhappiness. A lot of other afflictions are associated with wrong views. So the point is most of our afflictions come from feeling good or bad, while misperceptions of reality or ignorance often arise from neutral feelings.

A huge point of mindfulness is to watch our feelings. Why? To be aware when they arise, and not to be carried away by our own emotions. It is hard to explain how it happens, you just lose it, carried away by a wave of emotion. The problem is that the emotion, in itself is a problem, but even worse is that the emotion leads to afflictions and actions that have consequences.

We need to be aware of our emotion or the absence of those, the absence of constructive emotions. Like in a terrible situation, if I could help someone and I don't, I need to be aware of the absence of positive emotions.

So we need to be a kind of spy on our own mind while being in the present and watching our own mind.

What do you think mindfulness of the body means?

AIDAN: To get in touch with the body.

GESHE WANGMO: what do you mean? More subtly than being poked or getting hot?

AIDAN: In the *Sutra on Mindfulness of the Body*, being aware of even inner organs of the body.

DORIS: You can be aware of the heartbeat.

GESHE WANGMO: So on a subtle level, through training.

STUDENT: Sensation.

GESHE WANGMO: Right now I'm aware of the sensation of the heat?

DORIS: Neutral, positive and negative.

GESHE WANGMO: I included pleasant. . . those are mental though associated with the body.

STUDENT: The sensation of change.

GESHE WANGMO: So true. What does the mind and the central energy wind in the body; when the mind is effected the energy wind effects the coarser energies of the body or the body itself. When we are nervous, our body can become very uptight without our being aware of it; so to be able to relax.

Dharma doesn't necessarily mean Buddha Dharma, but any phenomena, and also become more aware of the people around us rather than preoccupied by our own problems; putting ourselves in other's shoes, being attentive.

KELSANG: What are we trying to do with mindfulness of the body?

GESHE WANGMO: To observe the changes in the body. Last time, some thought that any time . . . mindfulness

KELSANG: When you are being mindful of the feelings you are trying to guard your mind from doing something negative. With the purpose of watching the body?

AIDAN: Even for the feelings, mindfulness is not necessarily guarding the mind.

KELSANG: I understand that you are watching to avoid engaging in negative emotions or deeds.

GESHE WANGMO: You are expressing two different views. Kelsang says there is a purpose to watching the feelings in order to apply antidotes when negative feelings arise. While Aidan said actually the purpose of watching the emotions it is to become more aware of the emotions, to know our own feelings better. Similarly with the body, to become aware of the bodily feelings, release tensions . . .

DORIS: In Hinayana tradition, you want to acknowledge everything that comes up in your mind. If you acknowledge body, mind and sensation objects. That way, if you acknowledge pain, e.g., it goes away or becomes irrelevant and the body becomes more pliable.

GESHE WANGMO: So in the Theravada some of the techniques are different. When there are situations in the body, right away we label sensations in the body as positive or negative, rather than just acknowledging and letting go. And these are techniques to aid on in concentrating the body. To not follow what's happening in the body, but to let it go.

KELSANG: Mindfulness during activity of daily life, is there a purpose to watching the body, rather than just on the meditation cushion with goal to concentration.

AIDAN: can be a way of developing concentration. You're brushing your teeth, you become aware of the sensations of taste, feelings of the gums, as an aid to concentration.

GESHE WANGMO: As a tool of concentration, focus on the sensation.

KELSANG: . . .

GESHE WANGMO: Mindfulness serves as a tool to — on the one hand become more concentrated, to get to know the mind and body better; to become familiar with characteristics that are generally hidden from us . . .; or as a tool for understanding selflessness.

STUDENT: I think there are so many functions of the body that are subconscious as when we're speaking with some one, rolling your eyes, various unconsciousness emotional reactions in conversations.

DORIS: I've been watching this woman walking every morning, I can tell how tense she is.

GESHE WANGMO: So many gestures, there's a science of micro-gestures, micro-expressions. So what our face is doing unconsciously; our face and mind affect each other. If you are really unhappy, just smiling will make you feel better. Our mind is so conditioned to feelings associated with that muscle action that it becomes a little calmer. You look skeptical — try it.

GILAH: When we are really angry, you can't smile.

GESHE WANGMO: When we are really angry, there's a resistance to smiling. As we are walking, what is my face . . . we know that sometimes we see certain faces, we go . . . Whenever I see Geshe Thupten Jinpa, he always has a nice smile. I noticed

it because I always had a feeling that he was such a nice person when I saw him, and then I realized I felt that way because he's always got a slight smile that's very pleasant.

. . . so we have a responsibility to watch our own face; and also include what Rein said . . . and it's not just the sub-conscious gestures, we're not really aware of many of our sub-conscious awarenesses.

Just to remind ourselves of the importance. Especially in the West and the 21st century. Maybe in Tibet, years ago when they were nomads out in the country, they were probably calmer than Tibetans living in modern world. We're no longer even satisfied with movies from the 1950's — they're too slow and boring.

So we miss out on much more due to speed. You won't hear His Holiness speak that much to Tibetans about mindfulness.

Approaches to Studying Our Text

A tool to help us understand the mind better, and to understand that each mind must have been preceded by a former of mind. Here the syllogisms, the reasons set out here are a bit complicated and are not too easy to understand.

I've said it before, these texts are often intentionally made complicated because we're being encouraged to spend time reading it again and again in order to analyze what is being set forth.

When questions arise, that's a good thing. If you are still in school, you don't have a problem with this; but for many of us, you went to school and finished your education quite some time ago; and we're used to knowing things. Then we start studying the Dharma and we get frustrated with things that are supposed to be very good: not understanding, having a hundred questions. If there's a sense that you just read it and understand it, that's a problem.

The more questions, the better. Then you start ordering the questions, write them down, to become more clear about what bits you understand and what you don't. When you debate, that's what becomes clear. Sometimes, just saying it aloud, repeating it, in a dialogues with someone else. Even if you don't understand a thing, in the beginning, you repeat the text and ask, what does this mean? And they may not understand it either, but they have to say something; and you respond.

When there's a great sense of confusion, remember, the more confusion the better, because it means you still have something left to learn. How wonderful! That's how we were trained. Now when I read difficult text, I think it's a text. . . . Sometimes when I'm translating the text, I go, 'Now, this is the end! I've just read a paragraph that cannot be translated'. But now, since that's happened so many times, I just laugh. I read it again, read explanations, etc.

So this we need to do is see these studies as an enjoyable challenge.

20170426C08T2. MP3 - TRACK 2

Three Syllogisms - Establishing Continuum of Consciousness

Here [p. 177], the first syllogism says:

(a) *Regarding the subject, a newly born being's exhalations and inhalations, they do not – when that being has fully taken birth – exist independently of earlier continuums of a similar type, because they are exhalations and inhalations.*

How do you go about this: take each part. This is exactly how it is said in Tibetan. We're lucky, we have punctuation and spaces between words — unlike Tibetan.

What do exhalation and inhalation mean? Breathing in and out, the most basic activity that we do. It accompanies us our entire life; there are whole meditations on it, watching your breath. If we can't focus on only one object, we have focus on in and out.

Why is breathing important? Not just because it is always there, but it is associated with the energies of our body. Those two, inhaling and exhaling, the breath in and out: *they do not exist independently of earlier continuums of a similar type.*

To put it more simply, this is a double negative, take out the negation: they do exist dependent upon a former continuum.

Basically, it is saying, exhalation and inhalation always depend on an earlier continuum of a similar type, because they are inhalation and exhalation.

Then you add a little bit of nitty-gritty stuff: a newly born being. What did we hear last time, what is the meaning of a newly born being? Not a being born out of the womb, but born in the womb.

In this context, the word can be used differently: being born in the womb, referring to conception, or from the womb.⁴

Here it refers to conception. A consciousness has been born into a fertilized egg. So that type of newly born being's exhalations and inhalations.

First question: what newly conceived being breathes in the womb? This would be a good debate question. I can debate: You're talking about breathing by a newly conceived being.

Second question: I don't understand exhalation and inhalation in the continuum of a newly born being.

⁴ Fn. 80, p. 177 - Please note that in Tibetan, the term "to take birth" (*skye ba len pa* - སྐྱེ་བ་ལེན་པ་) can refer to both conception and – in the case of a mammal – birth from a mother's womb. Yet in the context of the presentation of past and future lives it usually refers to conception. In order to differentiate between conception and actual birth, the term is sometimes used in the following two ways: (1) to take birth *in* a mother's womb (*ama'i mngal na skye ba len* - འཇམ་འཇམ་མཇམ་ནས་སྐྱེ་བ་ལེན་པ་) and (2) to take birth *from* a mother's womb (*ama'i mngal nas skye ba len* - འཇམ་འཇམ་མཇམ་ནས་སྐྱེ་བ་ལེན་པ་).

So that is establishing the boundary lines of what you do know and what you don't know. Look at what you understand and what you don't understand. Then you can formulate your questions in a way that is most effective to get an effective answer.

So I don't understand: can this be taken literally or does it need to be interpreted? There are many things that need to be interpreted:

... they do not – when that being has fully taken birth – exist independently of earlier continuums of a similar type, ...

Okay, they exist in dependence upon an earlier continuum; that I understand. Why talk about a *continuum of a similar type*? *It always depends upon an earlier continuum of a similar type.*⁵

Earlier Continuum of a Similar Type - the Substantial Cause of later continuum

What is a *continuum of a similar type*? What is the difference between an *earlier continuum* and an *earlier continuum of a similar type*?

STUDENT: They're of the same nature.

GESHE WANGMO: No. If something is of the same nature, they have to exist at the same time. So if it is something that existed earlier, therefore, it is not of the same nature; it is not of the same nature.

So to be an *earlier continuum of a similar type* means to be the substantial cause of something. What is the substantial cause of a table? The things that transformed into the table, the wood, the glue and nails; whereas the carpenter did not transform into that table; the carpenter is a cooperative cause of the table.

Now an *earlier continuum*: a question that may arise: is there a difference between an *earlier continuum* and an *earlier continuum of a similar type*?

Is whatever is an earlier continuum of something always its cause?

So that is a substantial cause. But a question:

⁵ [p. 177, ¶9] Please note that whatever is a phenomenon's "*earlier continuum of a similar type*" (*rigs 'dra'i rgyun snga ma* - རིགས་འདྲའི་རྒྱན་སྣ་མ་ or *rigs 'dra snga ma* - རིགས་འདྲ་སྣ་མ་) is necessarily the substantial cause of the phenomenon. This means that it has the following characteristics: (1) it is a continuum that precedes and transforms into that phenomenon and (2) it has the potential to generate the phenomenon. For instance, a seed is the substantial cause of a sprout. Thus, since the seed becomes or transforms [p. 178, ¶1] into the sprout, the seed and its resultant sprout are one continuum (with the seed constituting the earlier and the sprout the later continuum [Fn. 82]).

Fn. 82 - Not only do the seed and the sprout form a continuum, the seed and the sprout are both continua. The seed is a continuum because it is made up of earlier and later moments of a seed, while the sprout is a continuum because it is made up of earlier and later moments of a sprout. It is important to understand that there is *no* seed or sprout that is not a continuum; whatever is a seed is necessarily a continuum and whatever is a sprout is necessarily a continuum. This is because there are no smallest moments in time. Hence, any impermanent phenomenon consists of earlier and later moments which can again be subdivided into earlier and later moments. In fact, any moment of a phenomenon can be endlessly subdivided into earlier and later moments, for if that were not the case it would absurdly follow that there is a smallest moment in time that does not consist of sub-moments.

- Can something be an earlier continuum of something and not be its cause? Is whatever is an earlier continuum of something always its cause?⁶

An earlier continuum doesn't have to be the immediately preceding continuum. Since all continua have beginningless preceding continua, trillions of years.

Let's say a trillion years ago, the earlier continuum of this table, is that the cause of this table?

In a way you want to say, yes. Now there's a debate that I did on the debate ground. If somewhere to say that whatever is the earlier continuum of this table must be the cause of this table? But what does a cause do? It's responsible for the arising of the table.

Do you remember the debate, Aidan?

AIDAN: A cow and the Buddha.

GESHE WANGMO: Can there be an earlier continuum of a Buddha who was a mass murder? When we think about it, Buddha was previously an ordinary person; and there could've been a prior incarnation who was involved in a genocide. Would that person earlier in the earlier continuum of the Buddha be a cause of the Buddha.

Is that serial killer a cause of the Buddha? It's part of the earlier continuum of the Buddha? If a farmer was an earlier continuum of a Buddha, that sounds fine; but

ANDY: Well Milarepa became a Buddha in the lifetime he had killed many people.

GESHE WANGMO: Well, he generated regret. But perhaps the earlier mass murder in continuum of the Buddha never generated regret but purified his karma in hell. If mass murder Milarepa can become a Buddha in the one life; why can't mass murder in the earlier continuum of a the Buddha not be the cause of a Buddha.

Which of the aggregates makes a person a serial killer? The mental consciousness. A Buddha is a Buddha because the mental consciousness; that's why we discuss the mental consciousness.

Sense consciousnesses are not kind or angry. Our main aggregate that makes us who we are is determined by our mental consciousness. Even becoming a Beauty

⁶ [p. 178, ¶¶2-5] Further, the seed has the potential to generate or produce the sprout, which is why the seed is described as the sprout's "earlier continuum of a similar type".

Similarly, since the sprout is the substantial result of the seed, the sprout is the seed's "subsequent continuum of a similar type".

Therefore, a newly-born being's mental consciousness depends on its earlier continuum of a similar type, the mental consciousness of the being's immediately preceding life, because that past life's mental consciousness is the substantial cause of the present mental consciousness.

Likewise, a newly-born being's mental consciousness is the *subsequent continuum of a similar type* of the past life's mental consciousness, since it is the substantial result of the past mental consciousness.

Queen comes down to the mental consciousness. So can the mental consciousness of a serial killer, the wish to kill as many as possible, be the substantial cause of the Buddha?

STUDENT: Even the serial killer has the Buddha Nature.

GESHE WANGMO: But it is very hidden; even though present. So this is a debate. This is why it here it is specified to be an *earlier continuum of a similar type*.

So the respiration in a newly conceived being is preceded by its own substantial cause. That part is clear.

Lucid Sense Powers

The second syllogism is very similar:

(b) *Regarding the subject, a newly-born ordinary being's lucid sense powers, they do not – when that being has fully taken birth – exist independently of earlier continuums of a similar type, because they are sense powers.*⁷

. . . Again, newly conceived; sense powers. So newly conceived beings don't have eye sense powers, or ear sense powers, not even a body sense power — they don't have a nervous system. So the subject is really odd.

So *Lucid Sense Powers*. Let's just take the sense powers themselves, like in ourselves, they must always be preceded by a former continuum because they're lucid sense powers. That makes sense. So we know what we understand and what we don't understand. I still haven't explained when the being has fully taken birth – on purpose.

Specific Awareness, e.g., Distractedness, & Newly Born Conception

The last syllogism:

(c) *Regarding the subject, a newly-born ordinary being's specific awarenesses, such as his distractedness, they do not – when that being has fully taken birth – exist independently of earlier continuums of a similar type, because they are awarenesses.*⁸

We assume from a Buddhist point of view, there's definitely consciousness present in the conception body; so awareness is there. Since conception entails a consciousness, then there's some sort of awareness. . . . It is not really exactly clear

⁷ “Lucid sense powers” refer to a living being's five sense powers: the eye sense power, the ear sense power, the nose sense power, the tongue sense power, and the body sense power. As mentioned above, these are subtle physical forms associated with their respective sense organs. Together with the observed object conditions and the immediately preceding conditions, they generate the different sense consciousnesses and empower those consciousnesses to perceive their objects. [p. 177, ¶9]

⁸ It is through the ascertainment of positive and negative concomitance that it is established that the distractedness, etc., of awareness is generated by familiarity with its cause. Were that not to be the case, there would be a logical absurdity: it would follow that there are no causes and results, because there would be no *pramana* that ascertains them. [p. 178, ¶6]

what the Tibetan word (translated in text as *distractedness*) means; everyone explains it slightly differently but in the end, I did find it in a Tibetan-Tibetan dictionary. What the word seemed to mean was *distractedness* — so the mind going all over, being distracted. So different awarenesses in a newly conceived being don't exist independently of a continuum of a similar type, because they are awarenesses.

Awarenesses need to be preceded by awareness. For a table, it needs to be preceded by an earlier continuum of a similar type that is a physical phenomenon.

Where does a person come from? That's how we can determine past lives. If I take the moment earlier, there are so many earlier moments of consciousness for us in this life. The earliest is the consciousness at the time of conception.

Syllogisms

In order to make that reasoning awareness, I gave you an example of another type of reasoning: In my neighbor's house, there's fire because there's smoke . . .

In order to be able to infer that there's fire, which is not obvious, by way of the smoke which is obvious, I need to know what fire and smoke are and their relationship; then smoke can be an effective reason that allows me to infer that there is fire. This is a similar idea here.

So I know *consciousness*. Let's examine that syllogism first [*Regarding the subject, a newly-born ordinary being's specific awarenesses, such as his distractedness, they do not – when that being has fully taken birth – exist independently of earlier continuums of a similar type, because they are awarenesses*] because I know consciousness.

Here we're talking about a *newly born being's* consciousness. It is hard for me to know another person's consciousness but, in general, I can have a sense that another person has awareness like I do. Therefore to make this effective, I need to think of a person who is newly conceived.

This added phrase, *has fully taken birth*. . ., Geshe Palsang Drakpa added that phrase to indicate the process of conception is complete. We don't actually know when the process is complete. So you don't know: am I looking at a newly conceived human being? Scientific medicine can see a newly fertilized egg, but we don't know whether or not a consciousness is inside that egg.

But usually when a change or growth starts taking place, then we can be pretty sure there's consciousness. There is room for debate, but let's keep it simple for now.

So *fully taken birth* refers to when you are *fully* sure this person has been conceived. I put in Footnote 81 which begins:

Of course, it may be difficult to observe, for example, a fertilized human ovum. Yet even in the case of the eggs of "external fertilizers" such as female frogs who release their eggs in the water to be fertilised by their male counterparts, . . .

You look at a newly fertilized egg, and then understand there's consciousness which must have been preceded by a former moment of consciousness, its own substantial cause. So you could observe a frog's egg:

it is not immediately obvious whether a consciousness has entered the fertilized egg and whether it now contains the body of a sentient being. This becomes more evident only when the ovum starts to grow. [fn. 81, p. 177]

Has fully taken birth means has been fully conceived. That's our subject (A). On the basis of a fully conceived being's awareness in the fertilized egg, (B) its consciousness must have been preceded by a prior moment of consciousness.

This is the way that Dharmakirti sets it forth, and Gyaltsab Je makes it a little bit easier.

STUDENT: Is it necessary for the being to have a brain in order to be aware?

GESHE WANGMO: Not per Buddhism. Certain types do require a brain; but certain subtler types of awareness do not require a brain. This is very difficult, of course. Basically it comes down to this reasoning that can only be understood if you understand subtler types of mind.

We had this discussion before about out-of-body experiences which are difficult to prove other than with the witness' stories basically. But here, the idea is that the awareness of a person who has an out-of-body experience is much subtler than our ordinary mind. It is not as coarse as the ordinary mind.

Therefore, here:

Regarding the subject, a newly-born ordinary being's specific awarenesses, such as his distractedness, . . .

And so forth:

– *when that being has fully taken birth* –

That is, *fully* been conceived. Then this type of awareness must have had a substantial cause that has existed before, because it is *distractedness*.

And when was that awareness before? In a previous life. It's been *newly conceived*; so an *earlier continuum* must be either one of two possibilities:

- Either it comes from the parents, or
- It existed before the consciousness entered, in this case, the fertilized egg.

So that's what this was saying here.

Respiration & Sense Powers in Newly Born Conception

I've given basically all of the explanation here on this and the next page. Except that we're still not clear about the *exhalation/inhalation* or *lucid sense powers*.

The explanation about respiration: is this referring to the *potential*? Does it mean the potential for *exhalation/inhalation*, not literal *exhalation*?⁹

⁹ [p. 178, ¶5] However, according to some scholars, the exhalations and inhalations mentioned here do not refer to actually breathing in and out but to the *potential* to do so. It is difficult to assert that a living being's respiration goes from one life to the next, because in the case of, for instance, a human who dies and is reborn again as a human, he stops breathing when he dies and respiration only resumes after he

Regarding the *sense powers*: Some say that the sense powers are very subtle form that are passed on from one life to the next. If that's the case, all I can think of is the subtle energy winds. If anything is passed on from one life to the next, it's the subtle mind and any accompanying subtle energy.

The sense powers don't go along, and aren't there when you're newly conceived; but the potential for those to arise is present.

Now the respiration is a little easier to explain from a non-tantric perspective and a tantric perspective. From the non-tantric perspective, what did we say earlier about awareness and breathing.

STUDENT: They're connected with the energy wind.

GESHE WANGMO: That's true. But do you need a mind involved with breathing? What kind: an *intention*; that is a type of *effort* necessarily for us to continue breathing.¹⁰

Clear Light Mind & Post-Death Meditation

We go, 'I'm not aware of that', when we first hear this. There are many examples of scriptural descriptions that are difficult to understand, e.g., the Clear Light Mind at the time of death. Something similar to the Clear Light Mind arises every 24 hours, at the time you go to sleep. I'm not aware of it; I'm aware of being awake and not when I fall asleep. I am definitely not aware when I'm in deep sleep. That's when a similitude, something like a similitude of the Clear Light Mind arises; I'm not aware of that.

We can develop more belief when we witness a lama who has died and remained in the Clear Light Mind of meditation.

KELSANG: In Bhutan, the highest abbot.

GESHE WANGMO: The very subtle mind is very useful because it is not in the nature of afflictions. It is difficult to make it manifest and use it.

One of the elderly monks, who was not a Rinpoche, at IBD, a teacher and very kind, when he passed, he remained in the clear light for about nine days. We all had to take turns doing pujas around the body. He was clearly dead. At Delek hospital, a cloth covering his face, but he was sitting in the meditation position. This was during the monsoon, 100% humidity. Imagine what the smell might have been; but there was no smell. He was very aware as his mind grew subtler, and when the

leaves the womb of his future mother. So the substantial cause of a newly-born being's *potential* to breathe is the potential to breathe from his previous life.

¹⁰ [p. 178, ¶6] Other scholars suggest that the exhalations and inhalations mentioned here refer to the seed of a particular type of *effort* – the effort that induces a person's breathing. As explained below, respiration is caused by a type of effort that is present throughout the greatest part of a person's life, without which the person would not breathe. Since that type of effort is a mental factor and thus a consciousness, it continues from lifetime to lifetime. According to this explanation, the substantial cause of a living being's present effort inducing respiration is the past life's effort inducing respiration; it is the continuation of that effort that animates the body's breathing in a future life.

subtle mind manifest, he chooses the object to meditate on. After nine days, the meditation was over; and the body was very fresh; it looked like a dead by that had just died; the moment the meditation was over, the decay set in.

I saw that. I'd not seen this anywhere else. So that helped me to understand that there is subtle mind. If that's true, why can't there be subtle effort to breathe.

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So there's effort involved in breathing. And the continuum goes on to the next life.

As I mentioned last time, I'm now transcribing Geshe Thupten Palsang's teachings on past and future lives that will be made available to all of you once it is done. Geshe-la says that there must be effort, the reason he gives as to why effort is present, is because if you think about something with great attention, then that effort [*involved in breathing*] can no longer work properly, and you stop breathing. Have you ever noticed? When you're really thinking of something, you'll start holding your breath. Basically, you stop breathing in that moment, but you can only keep that up for awhile, and then you begin breathing again. But if you pay a lot of attention to something, the effort doesn't have sufficient power and you stop breathing.

VEN. NORDRON: I've been told by a meditator that when yogis engage in certain advanced tantric practices, they stop breathing.

GESHE WANGMO: So there are a lot of extraordinary phenomena that are extraordinary because not many people practice them.

The point here is that this is being passed on. With regard to respiration, what this could mean is the potential of this effort. So at the time of conception, of course, the effort is not present, because if you had the effort, you'd have the breathing. The effort is not present, but the potential, the seed is. Seed is a word often used to refer to the potential of a consciousness. So the seed of that effort is present, and that is passed on from one life to the next which is what is meant by this here.¹¹

I still haven't understood exactly why they mention this; why it is so important; why they don't just speak about consciousness. In the summary, only consciousness is mentioned anyway.

¹¹ [p. 178, ¶7-8] However, in the case of a newly conceived embryo, it does not have the mental factor of effort inducing exhalation and inhalation in its mental continuum. As there is no respiration at that time, there is no reason for an awareness inducing respiration to be present. Yet, the *seed* for such effort (*i.e.*, the potential for such effort to arise) is present in that person's fetal continuum, which is why some scholars hold that 'a *newly-born* ordinary being's exhalations and inhalations' are serving here as a reference to that seed.

Both these interpretations are from the perspective of the sutric system of Buddhism.

Of course, the tantric explanation is interesting.¹² Actually we talk about respiration: what is respiration? The exchange of oxygen and CO². However, there's also energy going in and out; we talk about *energy wind*. It is not just the oxygen and CO² molecules, but it is also an exchange of energy. This energy that is exchanged in the body, externally and internally, is very coarse.

So in the tantric texts, you have a lot of explanation of coarse and subtle energies;¹³ *coarse energy winds*—actually in Tibetan there's no word for *energy*; the word used is, *wind*. So the *wind* element means *energy wind*. Wind, here, doesn't mean the wind of a stormy day. It refers to a certain energy.

The coarser energy exchange occurs during respiration, the exchange of the coarser energy; certain movements of our limbs, arms and legs, etc., all of those depend on coarse physical energy in the body. But there are also subtler levels.

What is the function of coarser energy? Movement, activity. Movement does not just mean movement from one place to another, for the body to be active, it needs energy. That's what we mean by energy. To be active, meaning physical activity, movement, which in Tibetan is called *movement*. Such activity on a physical activity is coarse and requires coarser energy.

On a subtler level, you have mental activity.¹⁴ Mental activity can only take place if you have very subtle energy that goes along with consciousness. So every consciousness has a subtle energy.

¹² [p. 179, ¶9 - p. 180 ¶¶1-3] Some scholars provide another explanation, from the point of view of Buddhist tantra. A person's breathing in and out refers to the coarser or more obvious movement of the coarser types of "winds", or vital energies. Although that kind of movement does not itself proceed to the next life, a subtler level of movement associated with a subtler wind does continue to a future life.

According to tantric physiology, the winds are not just moving air, they are vital energies that cause all movement by and within the body, such as breathing, the circulation of blood and other liquids, muscular movement, defecation, urination, and so on.

The energy winds are also instrumental in the functioning of the six types of consciousness (the five sense consciousnesses and the mental consciousness). The different minds would be inoperative without the winds to provide a medium for their movement. This is why the energy winds are described as mounts on which the awarenesses "ride", by analogy with a rider on a horse.

¹³ [p. 180 ¶4] The energy winds can be divided into the coarse and the subtle. The coarse winds operate in the ordinary waking state. The subtle winds operate at times of sleep, fainting, sneezing, orgasm, and dying; they also serve as the mount of subtler types of consciousness such as the clear light mind.

¹⁴ [p. 180 ¶5-6] Like the energy winds, consciousness can be divided into coarse and subtle levels of consciousness. The five sense consciousnesses are examples of coarse awarenesses. They ride on the coarse energy winds.

The subtlest type of awareness is the clear light mind and its mount is the subtlest type of energy wind. They (the clear light mind and its energy wind) are of one nature. The clear light mind has the aspect of cognizing its object, while its wind has the aspect of moving the clear light mind.

When we die, the body and mind separate, but dying there is a process. In Tibetan when you talk about death and dying, dying is the process where the coarser mind dissolves and the subtler, e.g., Clear Light Mind, becomes active.¹⁵ Not only does the coarser mind dissolve, the coarser mind that is associated with the brain — your brain stops working. So the coarser mind that is associated with the brain can no longer function; so that dissolves. Since the coarser mind dissolves, naturally, the subtler minds become active, and lastly, the subtlest, the Clear Light Mind.

In the way that the the coarser minds dissolve, the coarser energies also dissolve; and then only the subtler energies are active. Because the subtle mind is active, the subtle energy is active.

So I think that when people, after having had near death experiences, speak of a white light. It is interesting that in Tibetan this mind is called the Clear Light Mind. Those who remember their near death experiences, when they describe that, they speak of a white light, which is just being aware of that awareness. So Clear Light or white mind, has manifested at that moment and the subtle energy wind does, too. And those two, the subtle Clear Light Mind and the energy wind go on to the next life, which is why there is a respiration that goes on.

The first moment in the new body, in the new conception in a fertilized egg of, e.g., a human being, in the fertilized ovum, you have a subtle mind and subtle wind. So the *earlier continuum* can be found from the previous life.

Therefore, there's a sense in which this respiration makes sense.¹⁶ The sutric explanation is a little limited; and the tantric explanation makes more sense.

¹⁵ [p. 180 ¶¶7-8] The clear light mind does not manifest during the ordinary waking state. In the case of an ordinary person, it manifests only at the time of death (although a similitude of it arises at times of sleep, fainting, sneezing, and orgasm).

As part of the death process, a person's sense consciousnesses and coarse mental consciousness gradually dissolve into the clear light mind, while the coarser winds dissolve into the subtlest wind, the one that serves as the mount of the clear light mind. Thereafter, the clear light mind and its wind leave the physical body and move to the next life.

¹⁶ [p. 180 ¶¶9-11] At the time of death, the coarse respiration dissolves into the subtle "respiration" because the coarse wind associated with the respiration dissolves into the subtlest wind. In that way the function of movement (the exhalation and inhalation) of that coarse wind also dissolves into the function of movement of the subtlest wind. Therefore, when a person dies, subtle "respiration" goes on to his future rebirth since the subtlest wind proceeds to his next life. [fn. 84/](#)

Also, some scholars explain that it is not the five sense powers that are a continuation from a past life. Instead, it is their *potential*, i.e., the *potential* to empower sense perception, that continues from one life to the next. Hence, the substantial cause of the present *potential* of the sense powers is the sense powers' *potential* from the immediately preceding life.

However, since it is not only the *potential* of a consciousness that is reincarnated, but consciousness itself, it is the awareness of the immediately preceding life that acts as the substantial cause of the present awareness. The physical body of this life merely serves as a cooperative condition of this life's consciousness.

Subtle Mind [Clear & Knowing] is One Entity with Its Subtle Energy [Movement]

Basically, on the next page [pp. 179-180, see Fn. 9-16, above], I explained this. I'm debating with myself whether or not to change the order of covering this subject.

Basically, I've explained those three syllogisms. Hopefully, now they make more sense; so they're not as difficult as before.

FELIPE: I'm having a problem when you were explaining the Buddhist view on birth, that being when consciousness enters the fertilized egg. What does it mean for consciousness to enter something physical . . . and also, with the energy wind which also goes along to the next life, for me the presentation is kind of fuzzy in that sense. In broad terms we say that which migrates to other lives is not form, but if there's subtle form, how do they go together

GESHE WANGMO: How can you have something non-physical entering, the word, entering. . .

Do you believe you have consciousness?

FELIPE: Yes.

GESHE WANGMO: Where is it?

FELIPE: All around.

GESHE WANGMO: Is it in the corner over there?

FELIPE: It pervades.

GESHE WANGMO: It pervades. Does it pervade the entire room? If yes, tell me what is in the back corner of the room without turning around.

FELIPE: I can't.

GESHE WANGMO: Why not?

FELIPE: At this moment, I can't. But isn't it in the nature of consciousness to pervade all reality? This is why, for example, there's remote viewing. It wouldn't be possible if consciousness can't move. When I see the table over there, it's not that the table is coming towards my eyes; my consciousness is moving towards the table.

GESHE WANGMO: If it moves towards it, why doesn't it appear to become bigger?

FELIPE: . . . Consciousness isn't form; why does it have to enter?

GESHE WANGMO: We're so use physical terms so often when speaking. We talk about sound as though it's visible. But we do need to use some language.

Going back to the energy wind, when I asked you tell me what is in the back of the room without turning around, of course you can't see it as your eye sense power is

[FN 84] Please note that since the *Pramanavarttika* was composed from the point of view of the sutric and not the tantric system of Buddhism, this explanation as regards the subtle energy winds, etc., does not strictly reflect the intention of the author, Dharmakirti. As it nonetheless applies, it is added by some teachers when orally explaining the text, in order to broaden students' understanding.

not I the back of our heads. But we can say our consciousness is located somewhere. Otherwise your consciousness and my consciousness could be in the same place.

FELIPE: But my consciousness is not form . . . should be be able to find my consciousness.

GESHE WANGMO: Can I see consciousness?

No.

GESHE WANGMO: Can I see atoms? If atoms exist in your body, I should be able to see them, because they are there. That's what your argument amounts to . . .

STUDENT: You can see atoms with scientific instruments.

GESHE WANGMO: You don't see atoms, you see a reflection. What else do you have in your body that we can't see?

So do you have quarks in your body?

Felipe: Yes.

GESHE WANGMO: So if I look, I should be able to see them.

FELIPE: Do I have consciousness in my body? This is my question. Is there anything in my body that I can call, 'This is consciousness.

GESHE WANGMO: In your heart chakra, you have the very subtle consciousness. But that's the problem, you don't see.

DORIS: We don't see Chi either, and it's form.

GESHE WANGMO: Chi, the coarser energy wind that Chinese medicine calls Chi, we don't see it; but you can feel it. Chinese doctors can feel it.

ASHISH: 100 years ago, we couldn't see atoms, etc., we had to advance to see those things. Right now, there is a consciousness there, but we've not created a way to be able to see it. That doesn't mean that we won't in the future.

GESHE WANGMO: And some people, clairvoyants, can see our consciousness. They know your thoughts as opposed to Rajiv's thoughts; so in some way, they can locate them.

Phenomena Can be Different & Inseparably of One Nature, e.g., Consciousness & Its Energy Wind or the Color & Taste of Blueberry Cake

With regard to the issue of consciousness *entering* the fertilized egg, it's not contradictory, because something physical enters, the energy wind. And the consciousness and energy are of one nature and can't be separated.

- From the perspective of being clear and knowing, we speak of consciousness;
- From the aspect of movement, we speak of subtle energy.

Consciousness is the name we give to that which knows an object; while it has an aspect of physicality, movement.

Blue and non-blue are contradictory, but the taste of a blueberry cake is the opposite to its *blue color*. The blue dough of the cake has an aspect of color, non-taste, and an aspect of taste that is non-blue. In the same way, you have a physical energy that has an aspect that knows phenomena, and thus is non-physical.

Let me repeat: his logic is that energy wind cannot be of one nature — something physical cannot be of one nature — with something non-physical because those are opposite. So then the blueberry dough cannot be of one nature with something that is opposite, so then blueberry cake wouldn't have any taste. Any taste is non-blue.

This is a very idea, you find in the scriptures. The moment I think of something, *myself* and *my arm*, they seem different. One I call *person*, and one I call *arm*; and because of the different names, I see them as separate. It's difficult for us not to see things with different names as separate.

Felipe: It comes from the Buddhist presentation of phenomena which are impermanent but are not form; that's why I was wondering if consciousness and subtle energy are of one nature, in which case, then a part is form.

GESHE WANGMO: We don't find this in the sutric explanations.

The sutra system can't explain how the Form Bodies of Buddha come about. This is what a lack in the sutra presentation. You have an explanation of what gives rise to the mind of a Buddha and what gives rise to the physical body of the Buddha. Does that make sense.

I think Felipe's question is very important because we're all quite similar in seeing the world in dichotomies: good / bad; hot / cold; physical and non-physical. They're all relative. You call something mind that has the . . . for knowing and the aspect that moves as energy.

FELIPE: In relation to the respiration, you could argue from a scientific perspective that the fertilized egg is actually breathing because it in-takes oxygen and exhales; if you remove oxygen from a fertilized egg, it will die.

STUDENT: We don't say a person whose lost an arm isn't a person anymore; and there's the phenomenon of a person who's lost an arm, still experience perception of the arm as though it hasn't been amputated.

GESHE WANGMO: When we talk about — when we take to mind a tree and a branch of the tree, they appear totally separate to the conceptual consciousness, though they appear as one to our eye consciousness; they don't to our conceptual consciousness. Our conceptual mind does this thing of seeing things as either one or separate.

STUDENT: How does the energy enter the body when it's in the womb?

GESHE WANGMO: Subtle energy is so subtle, it's not obstructed by atomic structures. Even energy around us affects our body.

What does the first moment of respiration mean?

STUDENT: Inhalation/exhalation.

GESHE WANGMO: Does it literally refer to that?

STUDENT: The potential for breathing.

If Potential or Actual Respiration Exist in Newly Conceived Being, What about Sense Powers or Awarenesses (e.g., distractedness)?

GESHE WANGMO: What about the sense powers? Do they exist when we're newly conceived.

How about awarenesses such as distractedness? Do they exist when a being is first conceived.

DORIS:

GESHE WANGMO: So distractedness, maybe it requires coarser energies and consciousness . . .

Does that depend upon an earlier continuum of a similar type that is a substantial cause? Not just an earlier continuum?

AIDAN: Distractedness?

GESHE WANGMO: An awareness that is distractedness. The mind going here and there.

AIDAN: Like I'm trying to follow the class . . .

GESHE WANGMO: This has connotation of unintentional mental wandering.

Why do we use the phrase, "after having fully taken birth"?

STUDENT: Once it is born from the womb?

GESHE WANGMO: No. It refers to a newly born being in the womb, conception, but why that additional phrase, "after having fully taken birth"?

STUDENT: To be sure, it references that the consciousness has entered the fertilized egg.

POSITIVE & NEGATIVE CONCOMITANCE - CAUSES & EFFECTS

GESHE WANGMO: I hope you're not too exhausted. [P. 178, Gyaltzab Je:]

It is through the ascertainment of positive and negative concomitance that it is established that the distractedness, etc., of awareness is generated by familiarity with its cause. Were that not to be the case, there would be a logical absurdity: it would follow

that there are no causes and results, because there would be no *pramana* that ascertains them.¹⁷

What does positive or negative concomitance mean? It's a word I've used to translate a Tibetan word, that's much easier; but concomitance makes more sense. Positive or negative concomitance: concomitance has the connotation of relationship and association. Here it is in reference to the relationship between a cause and its effect.

A cause and its effect have either a positive or a negative relationship:

- If you have a cause, then you're likely to have a result;
- If you have a result, you must have had a cause; and
- If you have no cause, you can't have a result.

This seems, like, huh: for some things, we know that. It's so obvious: If you don't have a seed, you can't have a sprout. If you have a seed, you have a likelihood of having a sprout; and if you have sprout, you know you had a a seed. We all know this.

So why are we mentioning this here? Why are we saying that? Because sometimes, for some results, we don't really think the cause is the cause.

Again, we're so good at holding contradictory views. We believe in karma, lets say, we believe in karma. And now something happens to us. What do we do? We blame the other person. That shows we don't understand the positive and negative concomitance of karmic result and karmic cause. Right?

Because if we have a certain karmic result then — not only does the other person, who may have also been a cooperative condition or one of the conditions that was necessary for the karma to ripen, but we see that minor cause as the main cause of the whole thing, totally forget the main cause: if I hadn't created the karma for something like that to happen to me, it wouldn't have happened.

So, my first thought should be, 'Oh, I've created an action like that in the past.' And then aversion and hatred, etc., don't arise as strongly as in the first case. Just because we don't understand the positive and negative concomitance — I know, it's a terrible word.

The point is, just to understand that relationship, and not to understand it intellectually, but deep within. If something happens to me, there must have been a cause before.

We're so good at blaming our parents. It's such a big problem in the West. Seriously, I see this as a hug problem. First, it's a huge problem If you want to

¹⁷ Positive and negative concomitance here denotes positive and negative concomitance with regard to a cause and its result. As mentioned before, such concomitance describes the relationship between a cause and its result. Positive concomitance refers to the fact that when there is a cause, its result can be generated, and when there is a result, its cause must have preceded that result. Negative concomitance refers to the fact that when there is no cause, its result cannot be generated. [fn. 81, p. 178, ¶7]

contemplate the Seven-fold Cause & Effect method, that all sentient beings have been my mother, it's a big problem. It is amazing that this is such a huge problem in the west.

When I watch the Tibetans, they don't seem to even have any negative thoughts about their mothers. Because they look at the positive things that they've done. They don't blame their parents; they look at the good things their parents have done. And all the crap that happens to them, 'Well, I've done things in the past.' Although not all Tibetans don't blame other people, they don't blame their parents. It's part of their education to look at the good stuff their parents have done.

We need to really learn to feel this.

Just watch other people with their children. One of my brothers, before, it was just him and his snow board, and risk taking and doing crazy sports. Now he has a little girl, and now it's all her. They go to sleep when it's good for her. They eat what she likes; they go where she likes to go, etc. Their entire life revolves around this tiny being.

When I see this, I think, OMG, that's what my parents did. I was the center of their attention for how long. Before it was just them; like me right now: the food I like, the time I like to go to sleep; it's I, me and mine; right.

Then you have a child, and it is totally just that child. And this is what our parents did; and it is totally amazing. Then I have a problem, and my whole life is about, 'Oh, this problem came from my mom and dad.' Relationship over. It's bizarre if you think about it; it doesn't make any sense. Taking all the thousands and thousands of good things, and just one negative thing. Even if they made mistakes, they probably thought they were doing the best thing because they hadn't learned anything different.

Positive and negative concomitance when we were born is the result of what we did in that past. Come on, let's just face it. Not just blame our parents, but also understand, I've done something in the past. I was born in a certain circumstance, and I can change. And my negative qualities are basically the substantial result of my familiarity with their causes in the past. If I hadn't had familiarity with their causes in the past, I wouldn't have those qualities.

Because I've met Tibetans who've had the most horrific lives, and they are kind and gentle people. They were abused. So just being abused doesn't necessarily mean you become a cruel person; it's what you do with it. I know a monk whose entire family was killed, three generations dead, from an earthquake when he was seven years old. He was outdoors and survived. He was taken by Chinese to China where he was physically and sexually abused. It was terrible what he went through, but he was always thinking, I've created the causes; okay, I can make changes. No hate in his heart. And he's one of the kindest people I've ever met. He's turned that abuse around to become a most compassionate person. He says, 'I know what it feels like to be sick and so forth.' He was a monk, he was one of the caretakers at Drepung Loseling Monastery guest house, and whenever there was a foreigner who was puking all over him/herself, he would clean it up. He says, I know what it's like to be totally desperate. He is so kind.

All I'm trying to say here: positive and negative concomitance sounds boring. But we need to remind ourselves, if there really is karma, then we've created the causes. Let's not blame our parents here, there and everywhere.

From a karmic perspective, the positive karma we accumulate, there is a difference. A positive action is positive not just because of the action itself, but in relation to the object towards which it is directed. Any positive actions in relation to our parents is said to be very positive karma.

Now, if nothing else, if we have some kind of belief in karma, being kind to our parents is extremely positive karma; being unkind, the opposite. Like His Holiness says, 'Let's be wisely selfish'.

Because of this complicated relationship, I think we just misunderstood Freud. We took Freud to an unhealthy extreme. Okay. I'm not blaming Freud.

Positive and negative concomitance from that point of view.